Changing the Future Workforce by Connecting Education and Business

IT-oLogy

By Powers Strickland, Communications Manager, IT-oLogy

Education and business – how do they go together? For years, academia has been the supplier of graduates to industry. Times have changed and now collaboration amongst education and business is necessary for us to grow and cultivate the future workforce of South Carolina (and the nation). **IT-oLogy** recognizes this need for change and is a strong proponent for connecting the two. Business needs are constantly changing and are very different today than they were ten years ago. We live in a digital world; one where IT enables all industries and is necessary in any business, no matter the size. This evolution of business requirements must be communicated to our students. What better way to do this than through our education systems?

Graduates must be prepared to enter the competitive workforce. Students need to not only build a foundation in the classroom but they also need to learn what it is businesses require. Students need experiential learning opportunities; this will allow them to develop critical thinking and problem solving skills, as well as apply what has been learned in the classroom to real-world situations. Today's students learn through innovative learning experiences both in and out of the classroom.

IT-oLogy promotes collaboration between academia and industry through three initiatives: Promote IT (K-12), Teach IT (Higher Education) and Grow IT (Professionals and Businesses). By Promoting IT, educators are matched with business leaders through the MEBA IT Alliance. During these Educator Field Studies, teachers and counselors learn first-hand from business leaders what skill sets they expect students to be equipped with upon graduation. Why is this important? Educators take this newfound knowledge back to the classroom and infuse these case studies and experiences into their curriculum.

IT-oLogy works in collaboration with businesses and colleges and higher education institutions to Teach IT. We need to make sure colleges and universities provide curriculum and experiences that prepare graduates to meet industry needs. Curriculum needs to reflect the changes that take place in our global economy. IT-oLogy works with college and university professors to shape the curriculum to keep up with changes in the industry. IT-oLogy connects educators and industry executives to identify needs and shortfalls.

Students require opportunities to gain experience so they graduate with more than a diploma. IT-oLogy also connects college students with internships through the Next Generation IT Internship Program. Internships are an important component to the IT-oLogy recipe for success because business provides students with the much needed experiential learning opportunities. Internships prepare students for a job because students experience real-world issues, situations and environments. Students have the opportunity to apply their skill sets in a real work environment and deliver real results.

This past spring I attended an event where Michael Brenan, Regional/State President of BB&T, spoke. Mr. Brenan said, "We have all the ingredients in South Carolina to be a lot better than we are." I could not agree more. We have the educators, the businesses and the strong desire to make the future workforce great. IT-oLogy is taking steps to do just that – change the future workforce by connecting business and education.

Powers Strickland is the Communications Manager for IT-oLogy. IT-oLogy is a non-profit collaboration of businesses, academic institutions and organizations dedicated to growing the IT talent pipeline and advancing the IT profession. For more information on IT-oLogy, please visit www.IT-oLogy.org.